

REMARKS

This Amendment is in response to the Official Action mailed on November 3, 2005, the shortened period for responding with a two month extension of time being set to expire on April 3, 2006. Claims 1-44 are pending in the application, in which claims 5, 7-13, and 20-44 have been withdrawn.

Initially, Applicants maintain their position that U.S. Patent No. 3,828,215 to Bilback ("Bilback") fails to teach the features of Applicants' claimed invention set forth in the previously-filed amendment; namely, that the frame holds the sheet "in tension" or that the flexible sheet is "sealed" to the mounting surface. However, in order to expedite allowance of the application, Applicants have further amended the claims to distinguish Bilback.

By the present amendment, claim 1 has been amended to recite that "said sheet covers a substantially entire area of said aperture." Claims 14 and 16 have been amended to recite that the exterior surface of the sheet is exposed through "a center of said aperture." Applicants contend that there is support in the specification for the above claim amendments and no new matter has been added. (See FIGS. 1 and 2.)

Bilback fails to teach that a flexible sheet "covers a substantially entire area of said aperture" of the frame or that an exterior surface of the sheet is exposed through "a center of [the] aperture" of the frame. In fact, the Bilback sheet itself is in the shape of a frame. (See FIG. 2.) Indeed, the Bilback sheet 16 has an aperture with an area that is almost identical to the area of the aperture found on the underlying component board 17. (See FIG. 2; col. 5 ll.17-19.) Moreover, because the tabs 61, 62 of the film 16 are flexible, and not held in tension, the tabs 61, 62 defining the edges of the aperture of the film can be "pulled forward", and a gas panel can be "inserted into the apertures of the component board 17,

and the flexible sheet 16." (Col. 5, ll. 7-12 (emphasis added).) This particular arrangement allows the exterior surface of the gas panel to be exposed through the apertures of both the film and the component board 17. Bilback therefore teaches away from the film covering a "substantially entire area" of the aperture of the component board or an exterior surface of the film being exposed through a "center of [the] aperture" of the component board. Thus, Applicants respectfully assert that Bilback cannot be relied upon to anticipate or render obvious the claimed invention.

The remaining pending claims depend from independent claims 1, 14, and 16. Accordingly, Applicants contend that Bilback also fails to teach or suggest the features of the remaining claims.

As it is believed that all of the rejections set forth in the Official Action have been fully met, favorable reconsideration and allowance are earnestly solicited. If, however, for any reason the Examiner does not believe that such action can be taken at this time, it is respectfully requested that he telephone Applicants' attorney at (908) 654-5000 in order to overcome any additional objections which he might have.

If there are any additional charges in connection with this requested amendment, the Examiner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 12-1095 therefor.

Dated: March 6, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

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